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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 FREETOWN 000425

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W (JHUNTER)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/28/2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KCOR](#) [SNAR](#) [SL](#)  
SUBJECT: VICE PRESIDENT MAY BE BOOTED FOR ALLEGEDLY  
SWINDLING AMCITS

Classified By: Political/Economic Officer Amy LeMar for reasons 1.4 (b/  
d)

¶1. (C) Vice President Samuel Samsamana has been named as a third party defendant in a civil suit in Perry County, Arkansas. The original suit was filed against the West family of Perry County, who borrowed money to buy equipment to be used in an logging enterprise in Sierra Leone; the Wests in turn named Taakor Tropical Hardwoods Holdings, Taakor Holdings of Missouri, and individuals, including Samsamana, in the suit. The allegations against Samsamana, identified as "an individual, the Vice President of Sierra Leone, Africa, and a shareholder, officer and director of Taakor Tropical Hardwoods Holdings," are as follows, quoted directly from the Third Party Complaint:

a) Accepted a Three Hundred and Fifty Thousand and No/100 United States Dollars, in bribes from (individuals named as Third Party Defendants) and thereafter used the powers of his office to illegally arrest two Perry County, Arkansas, residents who were employees of Third Party Plaintiffs who were working in Sierra Leone, Africa and, with the encouragement, cooperation, and assistance of Third Party Defendants...caused said employees to be held in penal custody in Sierra Leone, Africa, for a period of several months in a failed attempt to have Third Party Plaintiffs, sign over to Third Party Defendants all their right, title and interest in and to equipment that is mortgaged to Plaintiff and that is the subject of Plaintiff's Complaints thus defrauding Third Party Plaintiffs and Plaintiff;

b) Entered into a civil conspiracy whereby he, together with the remaining Third Party Defendants, unlawfully and in bad faith, agreed to cause Third Party Plaintiffs to incur the debts sued upon by Plaintiff with no intention of paying Third Party Plaintiffs or any of them for their use of their equipment or their services;

c) Engaged in a pattern of racketeering activity in which he and each Third Party Defendant has participated in as a principal whereby, in Sierra Leone, Africa, he took forcible possession of and commandeered the equipment of Third Party Plaintiffs purchased with funds Third Party Plaintiffs borrowed from Plaintiff and thus defrauded Third Party Plaintiffs and Plaintiff;

d) Represented to commercial banks that he owns equipment owned by Third Party Plaintiffs which equipment has been mortgaged to Plaintiff and which is the subject of Plaintiff's Complaints and employed said representations to borrow money from commercial banks pledging said equipment as collateral therefore thus defrauding Third Party Plaintiffs and Plaintiff;

e) Knowingly took advantage of Third Party Plaintiffs and Plaintiff by engaging in fraud, unconscionable, false and deceptive acts or practices meant to induce Third Party Plaintiffs to personally incur the debt sued upon by

Plaintiff, used and continues to use Third Party Plaintiffs' equipment for the benefit of his business, commerce, or trade, and induced Third Party Plaintiffs to perform personal services for him with no intention of paying them, therefore, all contrary to the express provisions of the Arkansas Deceptive Trade Practices Act, (id.);

f) Personally used deception, fraud, and false pretenses in disregard of the rights of elderly persons (Third Party Plaintiffs), who, because of their lack of sophistication, limited education, and age, were duped and persuaded to rely upon his representations and thus borrow monies from Plaintiff and now stand in jeopardy of losing property set aside for retirement together with other assets sued upon by Plaintiff which assets are essential to their health and welfare and the security of their retirement and all contrary to the express provisions of the Arkansas Deceptive Trade Practices Act (id.).

¶2. (C) Political section received a copy of the Third Party Complaint from a contact within the SLPP party, and does not have a copy of the original complaint, which likely states the dollar figure attached to the suit. The Third Party Complaint, however, states that "Third Party Plaintiffs are entitled to damages that include any judgment against them for all or any part of the sums Plaintiff has sued upon, the actual damages they have suffered because of the fraud of Third Party Defendants, punitive damages and attorneys fees as provided by the Arkansas Deceptive Trade Practices Act, (id.), and the amount Third Party Plaintiff paid for the Taakor Tropical Hardwoods Holding, LTD, stock together with six percent interest from the date of purchase, plus the

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costs of this action and all his reasonable attorneys fees." Post estimates that the Plaintiff and Third Party Plaintiffs are expecting remuneration of at least \$5 million.

¶3. (C) Information about the law suit has not hit the presses, though a contact in the British High Commission stated that he had originally received the news from Umaru Fofanah, the BBC stringer and president of the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ). Allegedly, the New Vision newspaper had information about the suit last week, but were paid by Samsumana to drop the story. Rumors then circulated about Samsumana being summoned to an American court and that he had been caught on tape accepting a bribe from Taakor. Samsumana's concern that the rumors would be printed led him to call Fofanah and demand that he use his authority within SLAJ to force all media outlets to refrain from publishing information about him. Fofanah refused, but the stories were never run - Samsumana likely bribed numerous journalists to keep things quiet.

¶4. (C) According to a high-level contact within State House, the President intends to use his constitutional authority to replace Samsumana before the suit becomes common knowledge: this could happen within the next two weeks. There are no obvious successors within the government, but a well-placed political contact suggested that Koroma may be trying to woo Dr. Morie Manyeh, a university lecturer and SLPP supporter from Kono. Post has little information about Manyeh, but knows that he is popular in Kono, which is a voting bloc that Koroma believes to be important. Manyeh is apparently playing hard to get, but it would be a feather in Koroma's cap to have a former SLPP member as his right hand, and Manyeh is thus being heavily courted. According to numerous sources, Koroma recognized Samsumana as a liability even before the April APC conference, and had started the hunt for his replacement then. Even if Koroma decides to keep Samsumana on-board now, the likelihood that he will be his 2012 running mate is slim to none.

¶5. (C) Comment: The Vice President is not particularly well-liked, but was put on the Koroma ticket to help ensure votes from the Kono District. Samsumana has a reputation for

corruption, and is also believed to be the instigator of some of the political violence that occurred in and around Kono in 2007 and 2008. There are also rumors that he is or has been involved in narcotics trafficking in the past, and has business dealings with former Minister of Transportation and Aviation Ibrahim Kemoh Sesay. He is popular in his home district, but he has not been embraced by the rest of the population - most citizens talk glowingly of Koroma, but rarely mention Samsumana in a positive way. His departure, though, could have significant ramifications for Koroma's administration and the country depending on the explanation given for what will likely be officially called a "resignation." If Koroma truly intends to sweep this under the rug, he can expect that the SLPP will use their knowledge of the suit strategically and to his detriment.

¶6. (C) Comment Cont: Koroma's popularity is likely high enough to withstand scandal, but his chances in 2012 could be scuppered if he fails to address Samsumana's actions directly and publicly. The SLPP is holding their knowledge of the case back, and will likely use it during the election period to discredit Koroma and his judgment. The SLPP, despite their immature antics, is capable of planning ahead: they have yet to make public the information they have that Koroma interfered with the course of justice to squash evidence of Kemoh Sesay's complicity in the July 2008 cocaine bust. These two incidents could be the one-two punch that proves that Koroma has not been true to his 2007 campaign promise of zero tolerance on corruption. That said, Koroma could use Samsumana's alleged indiscretions as an opportunity to prove his commitment to good governance by stating publicly why the Vice President was asked to resign. Sierra Leonean politics, however, operate on a system of subterfuge, ineptly-buried scandals, and long memories: Koroma is more likely to act now and justify his actions later, rather than be open with his constituents from the start. End Comment.  
FEDZER